



Meeting Notes

Design Guidelines Focus Group Meeting

3:00 p.m. – Wednesday, July 15, 2009

Cherry Bldg. Conference Room, 101 West Cherry Ave, Flagstaff, AZ

1. **Welcome and Introductions:**

In attendance:

Steve Dorsett, Architect
Will Freund, Architect
Daniel Paduchowski, Architect (Chair)
Paul Moore, Architect
Edwin Larsen, City of Flagstaff
Mark Sawyers, City of Flagstaff
Roger Eastman, City of Flagstaff
Karl Eberhard, City of Flagstaff
Norman Lowe, Citizen
Ryan Smith, Architect

2. **Focus Group Overview:**

Daniel (Chair) reminded the group of the purpose of the Focus Groups.

3. **Discussion items:**

Continuing with the consolidated issues list provided by Roger Eastman, the group talked about the issues that required further discussion.

1. Procedural regulatory issues associated with the design guidelines

- What is the role of design review in Flagstaff?
 - Assemble images of good buildings/design in Flagstaff
 - First choice should be a Flagstaff building – buildings and details
 - Images from magazines OK
 - Submit all images to Roger by July 30th as digital files; forward to consultants by mid-August after group has reviewed and agreed on the images
 - Design is more than aesthetics – context, comfort, safety
 - Existing design guidelines deal with context and site planning (levels I and II)
 - Level III could work better if it had more contextual language in it
 - Maybe create different design guidelines for different character areas

- Find other ways to get clients/developers to talk to the City Architect in a pre-design meeting before a submittal is made (incorporate into new zoning code)
- How to address incompatibility issues in design guidelines when zoning code creates incompatible uses and buildings?
- Mark – clarify the distinction between design standards for a context area and design guidelines (use the latter as an educational guide – set up the basics for contextual design in the guidelines) Useful for “bubba”!
- Design guidelines – include a requirement for a licensed architect in planning of a project (but limitations in ARS?). But maybe we can require a “design professional” in the zoning code as a requirement. Check with ED. Research other community’s practices. Think of ways to get architects involved earlier in the process – e.g. establish a higher threshold with the submittal requirements, e.g. 3-D drawing or renderings. Or think about adding those things that only an architect would do, that an engineer would not – site analysis diagram (solar orientation, wind direction, etc.) Refer to Grand Canyon Design Guidelines for site analysis guidelines.
- When a site analysis diagram is submitted at concept or pre-application meeting, we should also require concept elevations. Concern that this may require too much up-front money from a client.
- AIA has materials that promote the use of architects – include into the forward of the design guidelines to encourage architects to be hired by developers
 - Measurable requirements in the standards; non-measurable ideas/concept in the guidelines
 - Resolved.
- Design Review Board
 - Peer review by architects of architects evaluating non-measurable elements and providing direction on the design guidelines
 - Citizen committee instead of just Karl and other staff
 - Concern with the inevitable delay in the review process because this will be a public body
 - Consider adding a consent approval process to resolve this for smaller projects subject to some criteria (e.g. used now by HPC)
 - Set this up as a public meeting rather than a public “hearing”
 - Greatest benefit would be to support the staff decision when there is a “fuzzy” issue
 - But the group resolved that if the design guidelines are strengthened, made stricter (more proscriptive) and improved,

- there would not need to be a DRB and we should continue under the current system (Consensus)
 - Incorporate the images and drawings of what is good in Flagstaff into a pattern book
 - Resolved.
- “Whiners escape”
 - Not an issue – need to stand firm
 - Appeals to the Planning and Zoning Commission are possible
 - Resolved
- How to yield good design in Flagstaff?
 - Pre-application meeting concept will certainly help
 - Paul Moore wanted to discuss the issue of being too restrictive could limit the top 25% as well as the bottom 25% of good design efforts. The group made several references back to a pattern book, but were not in total agreement on how it would be put together or how it might be used.
 - Incentives were thought to be the best method of achieving or encouraging good design rather than specific "shall" requirements.
 - Ryan Smith felt that regulations did have a purpose and brought up the fact that it sometimes helps the design professional protect themselves from their clients when they try to push for specific requirements that don't fit the intention of the design guidelines (they can use it as a steering mechanism for keeping a client on track).
 - A lot of discussion focused around how you keep human scale and references to some of the larger 4-6 story buildings on the NAU campus. The group thought that conference center did a fair to good job of that seeing what was adjacent to the buildings on the NAU side and opposite sides of Butler/Milton Road.
 - The group struggled a bit with the definition of massing of buildings and/or forms. They really wanted to make sure that the design professional had good specific guidance on what would be required. Part of the issue here is that the six architects in the room each had a different perspective and could see the results going in different directions if not clearly laid out.
 - The discussion then moved into the various levels of design guidelines as they currently exist and whether they were even needed. Most of what was put together was to let the design professional know when it would be reviewed and required. The feeling was there needed to be more information and requirements for level 1 and 2 and maybe level 3 was too intense on the requirements. The specifics here seemed to center around the fact that the design professional wasn't engaged soon enough

during the process. The group felt that even the concept plan review of a proposal should include an architect...not just the engineer or staff.

- Additional notes from Daniel P: The group agreed on several issues relating to 'good design' like much stronger design guidelines, requiring as much "green" as possible so that green is a priority over quantifiable design issues like massing, unrelieved bldg planes, and such, but we also agreed that the discussion will continue on that subject as we bring images to the table. Much of the 'green' design issues that relate to site issues and building orientation, energy and water usage should be required (these would not, hopefully, be cause for a 207 issue, since they are building code and not land use), but those will go a long way towards yielding 'good design', we hope. It was suggested that those green elements be incorporated into the overall code, not just FBC applied, so that all new projects would be required to 'green up' as much as we can make them.
- Recommendations on design as a continuous process
 - The group then tackled the modifications in design from concept to final site plan review.
 - Mark Sawyers explained that we were one of the few cities in Arizona that allows up to 20% change in scope before the client has to go back to DRB for re-review of design changes. One draw-back that staff saw was the impacts on big developments, such as shopping centers. If a 20% change for example added an additional 40,000 sf of retail, it could impact the TIA and cause items to change off-site.
 - The conclusion of the group was to leave this alone as it appears to be working in its current form.
 - Resolved.
- Encourage the design and construction of "GREEN" Buildings?
 - Support for the notion of adding language to the Design Guidelines promoting energy or GREEN building enhancements.
 - Suggestion that the word "encourage" was too much like "recommend" and therefore wouldn't be done. Instead, incentives should be added to strengthen the requirements for GREEN building and siting aspects of design. This of course would mean the need for a site analysis and that should be done early in the process.
 - Staff suggested that it might be included with flexible measures for when a project does certain GREEN measures. Such as allowing less parking or credits for landscaping, etc.
 - Green elements need to apply to the application of Design Guidelines City-wide, not just in the Form-based Code areas.

- Generally resolved – may be revisited when the images reflecting good design are reviewed at the next meetings.

6. Should there be a requirement for a licensed architect?

- Design guidelines – include a requirement for a licensed architect in planning of a project - but there are limitations in ARS.
- But maybe we can require a “design professional” in the zoning code as a requirement. Check with ED. Research other community’s practices.
- Think of ways to get architects involved earlier in the process – e.g. establish a higher threshold with the submittal requirements, e.g. 3-D drawing or renderings that only architects can do as a way of ensuring their involvement early in a project.
- This could also be accomplished by having a requirement for a site analysis diagram (solar orientation, wind direction, etc.) Refer to Grand Canyon Design Guidelines for site analysis guidelines.
- Resolved.

4. Next meeting

July 29, 2009 at 3:00 pm - wrap up item number #3 (procedural/regulatory issues); finish #4 (resource conflict with good design) and #5 (cost issues)

August 5, 2009 at 3:00 pm – last meeting to review digital pictures for a pattern book to give the consultant an idea of the character of Flagstaff and the requirements for good design.

5. Adjournment

4:50 p.m.